

Enabling Burmese Language at OpenOffice.org

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Abstract

Burmese is an official language of Myanmar. There is no official support for Burmese language from international software vendors. Many local experts has been trying to provide Burmese Language support. There are many localized versions of international softwares. OpenOffice.org is the office suite like Microsoft Office but it is an open source software. It can be used freely. Recently, OpenOffice.org has accepted Burmese Language Project. It means that Burmese Language will be supported on international software.

1 Introduction

Burmese (Myanmar) is an official language of Union of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). It is recognized as one of the Tibeto-Burman group. According to Ministry of Immigration and Population, about 34.5 million people or 69% of the population speak as their first language and almost all the educated people in Myanmar speak as a second language if their mother tongue is another ethnic language.

But, there is no official support for Burmese language from international software vendors, such as Microsoft, Adobe, SUN (Solaris, Java), etc. Many local experts has been trying to provide Burmese Language support. Since the international software vendors do not support Burmese, achievements of the local experts cannot go beyond locally. This leads to the development of many localized versions for each international software, such as Microsoft Office, Windows, etc.

Among the softwares available, there are of two types: commercialized software and the free softwares. The commercialized softwares are the ones people need to pay for money for using it. There may be pirate versions of these commercialized softwares. The use of pirate version of commercialized softwares violate the international copyright laws. But the free softwares are the ones people can use it freely and do not necessary to pay money for using it. The free softwares can be distributed among the society under the appropriate license.

There are also open source softwares. The

open source softwares are developed by the community whereas the commercialized softwares are developed by a group of people worked in a company. In general, the open source softwares are the free softwares. Since the open source softwares are developed by the community, the community can easily add the features which will be useful.

2 OpenOffice.org

OpenOffice.org is the office application like Microsoft Office. It includes office applications such as Writer (like Word), Calc (like Excel), Base (like Access), Impress (like PowerPoint), Draw and Math (like Equation Editor). OpenOffice.org is free software, available under the GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL). There is also a portable distribution of OpenOffice.org, called "Portable OpenOffice.org", which is designed to run from a USB flash drive.

OpenOffice.org is an office suite application available free of charge for a number of different computer operating systems (Windows, Linux, Solaris, FreeBSD, OpenBSD, OpenVMS, OS/2 and IRIX) . It supports the OpenDocument standard for data interchange as its default file formats, as well as Microsoft Office '97-2003 formats (and Microsoft Office 2007 format in the release of summer 2008), among many others.

Large scale users of OpenOffice.org include Singapore's Ministry of Defense, and Bristol City Council in the United Kingdom (UK). In France, OpenOffice.org has attracted the attention of both local and national government

administrations who wish to rationalize their software procurement, as well as have stable, standard file formats for archival purposes. It is now the official office suite for the French Gendarmerie, several government organizations in India, such as India Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, the Supreme Court of India, the Allahabad High Court.

2.1 History of OpenOffice.org

OpenOffice.org was originally developed as the proprietary software application suite StarOffice by the German company StarDivision. The code was purchased in 1999 by Sun Microsystems. In August 1999 version 5.2 of StarOffice was made available free of charge.

On July 19, 2000, Sun Microsystems announced that it was making the source code of StarOffice available for download under both the LGPL and the Sun Industry Standards Source License (SISSL) with the intention of building an open source development community around the software. The new project was known as OpenOffice.org, and its website went live on October 13, 2000.

Work on version 2.0 began in early 2003 with the following goals: better interoperability with Microsoft Office; better performance, with improved speed and lower memory usage; greater scripting capabilities; better integration, particularly with GNOME; an easier-to-find and use database front-end for creating reports, forms and queries; a new built-in SQL database; and improved usability. A beta version was released on March 4, 2005.

On September 2, 2005 Sun announced that it was retiring the SISSL. As a consequence, the OpenOffice.org Community Council announced that it would no longer dual license the office suite, and future versions would use only the LGPL.

On October 20, 2005, OpenOffice.org 2.0 was formally released to the public. Eight weeks after the release of Version 2.0, an update, OpenOffice.org 2.0.1, was released. It fixed minor bugs and introduced new features.

As of the 2.0.3 release, OpenOffice.org changed its release cycle from 18-months to releasing updates, feature enhancements and bug fixes every three months.

2.2 Burmese Language Project (my.openoffice.org)

The OpenOffice.org community accepted Burmese Language Project recently. So, it is sure to add Burmese language features, like Burmese Calender format, currency format, spelling checking, sorting on OpenOffice.org. Once these features are enabled in OpenOffice.org, the whole Burmese Language speaking community from every part of the world can download these features from www.openoffice.org with the full office application.

Since OpenOffice.org is the community developed project, new project should be submitted to the community and review before getting acceptance. It is a time consuming and sometime needed to answer a lot of questions during the review process.

The project leader has to manage the developers to accomplish the project. The role of the project leader is to assign each part of the project to the respective developers.

3 Conclusion

The development of Burmese Language Project at OpenOffice.org will not only help the local Burmese Language Community but also help the Burmese Language Community of the world. This development will also help to preserve the Burmese Language and culture even though people are living in the part of the world other than Myanmar.

Since this will be the first Burmese language development on international software application, other international software vendors will take care of this development and it will force them to add Burmese language features in their own applications as well. Moreover, since OpenOffice.org can run on a number of different operating system platforms, the accomplishment of Burmese Language Project will also be useful for these different operating system platforms.

The OpenOffice.org office software can be get freely at www.openoffice.org or from Wunna Ko Ko (Project Leader, OpenOffice.org Burmese Language Project), ph: 09-5147783, email: wunnakoko@gmail.com. Contributors, both developers and donors, are welcomed.